DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 051 684 FL 002 256

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| AUTHOR | Gougher, Ronald L., Ed.; Bockman, John, Ed. |
| TITLE | Individualization of Foreign Language Learning in America, I. |
| INSTITUTION | West Chester State Coll., Pa. |
| PUB DATE | Dec 70 |
| NOTE | 9p. |
| EDRS PRICE | EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29 |
| DESCRIPTORS | Classroom Techniques, Educational Innovation, Individual Instruction, Individualized Curriculum, *Individualized Instruction, *Individualized Programs, Instructional Program Divisions, *Language Instruction, *Modern Languages, Newsletters, Program Descriptions, *Teaching Methods, Teaching Techniques |

ABSTRACT

This newsletter, devoted to the topic of individualization of foreign language instruction in America, contains a series of statements by prominent educators expressing their endorsement of the theory implied in this increasingly popular mode of instruction. A summary of general curriculum guidelines governing educators in the State of Pennsylvania in this area is included. Descriptions of two high school programs (Mountain View High School, California; and Live Oak High School, Morgan Hill, California) conclude the newsletter. (RL)

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WEST CHESTER STATE COLLEGE
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

# Individualization of Foreign Language Learning in America

I. DECEMBER, 1970

To say that different human beings learn at different rates and that some learn better by one method and some by another is stating the obvious. But is astounding that these obvious facts did not long ago lead to the development of curricula devoted to individualized learning.

Today, the theoretical foundation for individualized instruction is available, but we are still far removed from universal practical application. One major stumbling block is the lack of teachers: ideally, each individual student ought to have his own teacher. This obstacle, however, can be overcome by letting teaching machines take over at least part of the teacher's task. But what should these machines teach? At this time, the number of teaching programs is infinitesimal compared to the number of conventional textbooks.

The greatest need at the moment is the production of programmed materials, whether for computerized, computer-assisted, or traditional classroom teaching. The best individualized learning scheme will come to naught if the student has only a traditional textbook which he cannot understand without his teacher's help. Successful experiments notwithstanding, individualized instruction will not come into general use until workable--and inexpensive--tools are generally available.

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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## An Editorial Comment

We fear that mass teaching techniques of the past decade have prevented many of us from foreseeing that the whole business of teacher-led instruction could be ready to collapse. If the study of German in the United States should also collapse, devotion to a now intolerable mode of instruction and a naive faith in the teacher's role may be to blame. Those who have worked to realize this newsletter hope that the study of German will not so suffer at the hands of its friends.

We are involved in the search for a tolerable mode of instruction, given the inescapable fact and the state of modern technology. To put it bluntly, learning does not always depend on teaching. It does depend on proper management. It does depend on suitable programming. Our search is for wise management and superior programming. With them the study of German in this country will pretty much take care of itself.

For the first time in history a truly effective and a truly efficient individualization of formal instruction becomes thinkable. We are prepared to think it! Technology and program sophistication now allow a time differential that takes the chaos out of self-pacing by individuals. In the past, there has not been time for effective learning. Today we can create time, to a great degree, and this is what individualization is really all about.

John F. Bockman, Coordinator
Foreign Language Instruction
Tucson (Arizona) Public Schools

Ronald L. Gougher
Associate Professor of German
West Chester State College
West Chester, Pennsylvania

## Two Position Statements

The development of individualized programs for learning foreign languages at optimum rates is an encouraging breakthrough in foreign language education. There is good reason to believe that every student of a foreign language can achieve much more on his own than is generally expected of him by his teachers. It is to be hoped that individualized instruction will revitalize foreign language teaching and create renewed interest in foreign language learning, particularly among those students who have experienced disillusionment in the past with their foreign language courses.

Alfred D. Roberts, Chairman
Foreign Language Department
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West Chester, Pennsylvania

In the interest of utilizing the technological devices now at our disposal to individualize and personalize learning, I am enthusiastically committed to the development of programmed instruction. Not only would programmed courses enable each student to proceed at his own pace, but they would offer large non-resident groups new opportunities for continuing education.

The trend away from grades, assigned at the end of the term to evaluate the degree of mastery of a uniform body of subject matter, makes programmed instruction feasible within the present academic framework. Elementary and, as materials become available, intermediate work could be completed through self-study. The student would receive credit when he had mastered the prescribed material. Some gifted and highly motivated students might complete the assignments in a few weeks. For others several years might be needed, but these other students would be spared the frustration of failing repeatedly the same course, or of barely passing and lacking an adequate foundation for further work. In a cumulative subject like German, it seems nonsensical to send students into a second course who have received a D or even a C in the prerequisite work. For years we have had to do it, because our grading system forced us to evaluate the students' degree of mastery of a set amount of material. In programmed instruction the student will proceed to further lessons only when he has nearly complete mastery of the foundation on which these lessons build.

In the department to which I belong programmed instruction has been used successfully in the case of graduate students preparing for their reading examination in German. These with no previous training in German complete the equivalent of the elementary course at their optimum speed in the laboratory. The instructor is available to discuss questions on points missed on the tests. Otherwise the elementary preparation is accomplished through self-study. It is my hope that what has proved efficient in the case of our graduate students can be extended to groups of younger students. The responsibility for learning would then be where it belongs, with the students, and the instructor could assume the role of guide.

Elizabeth Bohning
Professor of German
University of Delaware
Newark, Delaware

## Sanction of the Pennsylvania Department of Education for Individualized Instruction

In my official capacity I can give you the sanction of the Department of Education insofar as the subject is covered in our General Curriculum regulations. The following excerpts from those regulations support the use of individualized instruction:

> "7-134 Exception to Hours of Instruction as a Basis for Awarding credit--At the discretion of the principal in consultation with the teacher, credit may be awarded for the satisfactory completion of a planned course as defined in Section 7-123a, regardless of the time actually spent in

class, in accordance with policies established by the Board of School Directors.

7-135 Credit by Examination--Credit may be awarded by the principal in consultation with the teacher to regularly enrolled students who successfully pass an examination which assesses mastery of a planned course, as defined in Section 7-123a, regardless of the time spent receiving formal instruction in the course, in accordance with policies established by the Board of School Directors.

7-141 Independent Study--Independent Study courses may be offered for credit.

7-142 Course Credit Flexibility--Students may earn course credit through correspondence study, attendance at summer schools, Saturday classes, study at summer camps, or in any other manner considered appropriate by the principal and approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

7-146 Pupils 14 Years of Age or Over Not Benefitting from the Existing Program--Any pupil 14 years of age or older who is not benefitting from the regular program as determined by his teacher may, with the permission of his parents and the school principal, have an individualized schedule containing those subjects from which he can profit to prepare him for an occupational skill. All such programs shall include appropriate instruction in citizenship and communication skills."

Fannetta N. Gordon
Foreign Language Education Advisor, German
Bureau of General & Academic Education
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

## Report from Delaware Department of Public Instruction on Individualized Instruction

The readers may be interested to know that these schools have been or will be working on individualized instruction.

John Dickinson High School - Latin
McKean High School - German
Mount Pleasant High School - French
Middletown High School - Spanish
Dover Central Middle School - Spanish
Newark Central Middle School - French
Woodbridge Junior High School - Spanish
Cape Henlopen High School - French
Laurel High School - French

Genelle Caldwell, Supervisor
Foreign Language Education
Department of Public Instruction
Dover, Delaware.

## TWO SUCCESSFUL HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS

### German Language Program
### Mountain View High School, California

The German Language program at Mountain View High School is an experiment with changes both in methodology and in structure. German students are working on a completely individualized study basis within a system of modular scheduling. The combination of these two factors has resulted in the creation of the language island (Sprachinsel). The physical make-up of this language island is designed specifically to facilitate the individual learning process. Located on the periphery of the room are tape recorder stations, phonograph stations, study carrels and all the related materials to make their use relevant to student needs. On one side of the room is a library and reading area where books, magazines, etc., are provided. Even a couch has been added. The remaining space is divided into 3 areas. First is the individual study area consisting of four circular tables. Here students study alone or in groups of two or three. Students test one another, give dictations, practice with vocabulary cards, or practice with informal use of the target language. Teacher aids are also stationed in this area and provide valuable assistance with drills, translations, dictations, written drills, etc. The second area is simply a Stammtisch around which students gather for conversation practice with the teacher. Throughout the day the teacher calls to this area a fairly homogeneously grouped number of 5 or 6 students taken from the individual study area to work on conversation. Vocabulary taken from the students' text is used as a basis for conversation, however, creative and relevant patterns and responses are required so as to encourage independence from the text. The remaining area contains the teacher's desk and the storage area for tests, test tapes, student files, etc. At the teacher's desk is an area provided for counseling and tutoring of independent students.

Within this physical atmosphere there take place the essential activities for learning of the target language. The student receives a check list of activities to which he must conform to complete a chapter of work. Included in these is the total spectrum of oral, written, and reading activities. Oral progress is achieved through use of tapes and records and through contact with teacher, with native speaker tutors, with student aids and with peers working co-operatively on the same unit. Written work is perfected in the usual manner through dictation, written exercises, written reports and teacher-directed individual assignments. Reading and translation is done on an individual basis as the student progresses through his outlined steps. Each student must read periodically, and the frequency is determined by the pace at which each student is completing his material. Basic to all of the students' work is that each student, as he completes any learning activity, is tested immediately and must achieve a minimum proficiency level before he is allowed to continue. The only basis for moving to the next chapter, for example, is a successful test. Grades are given only at the end of each quarter and are based upon progress in relation to ability, upon effort, and upon the will to learn the language. Under this system there have been some remarkable changes in attitudes.

The basic time structure of this program is as follows: A student is required to attend 40 minutes per day, four days per week. In addition he must attend a large group meeting of <u>all</u> German Language students one day per week.

In this large group meeting movies are shown, lectures on culture, history, etc. are given, and special presentations are made by guest speakers. The time of day at which students attend the Sprachinsel is determined by student time available after the computor has scheduled required classes. Thus, a student may attend at 9:00 a.m. on Monday and at 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday. However, by careful hand scheduling at the beginning of each semester I have been able to achieve fairly workable groupings for conversation and for individual study. Scheduling is a minor factor as long as the student uses the facilities constructively during the time available.

To be sure, this program is beset with many problems, but its problems seem to be offset by its many advantages. Among its problems is a lack of materials, both basic text and supplementary, which are developed specifically for individual study. Adjustments must be made in grading and credit systems. Minimum standards must be determined for the individual study process. Ways must be found to utilize para-professional help, student aids, and native speakers from the community as tutors and helpers in the individual study process. New teachers must be better prepared to cope with the changes and innovations, both in structure and in curriculum, now taking place in the high schools. The advantage which stands out most is the freedom for the student to move at a pace which is most commensurate with his ability. Providing this freedom is like opening a Pandoras box of solutions to many problems which until now have had negative influence on foreign language study. A few of the obvious: Too much student-teacher frustration and resulting conflicts. High attrition in foreign language classes. Too much repetition in class for bright students, not enough for slow students. Inefficiency of too much drill work. Assignments aimed at average group. Articulation problems occuring when students change school or teacher. Problems with placement of students in high school when entering from Jr. high language program. Ineffectiveness of expensive labs when students attend on a class basis. Etc., Etc. One will not find complete answers in an independent study program such as ours, but at least partial answers are strongly suggested.

Robert Mc Lennan
German Teacher
Mountain View High School
Mountain View, California

A Totally Individualized High School Program

| Course | Content | Prerequisites | Credits |
|---|---|---|---|
| German A | Conversational--greetings; numbers; colors; foods; music; shopping; travel. | None. Can be taken before, during, or after any of the courses below. | 5 Units HS |
| German B | Continuation of A. (No "grammar". A "direct" approach.) | German A. | 5 Units HS |

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| German X | German for fun. Games, comic books, puzzles, simple stories, songs, etc. | 1 year of any other German courses. May be repeated for credit with new content. | 5 Units HS |
| German 1A | The "normal" first semester college prep course now given (Kernstufe). | None. May follow German A & B if desired however. | 5 Units CP |
| German 1B | Continuation of 1A | German 1A | 5 Units CP |
| German 2A | Continuation of 1B | German 1B | 5 Units CP |
| German 2B | Completion of the "second year" course. | German 2A | 5 Units CP |
| German 3,4,5 | Individualized 3rd,4th, & 5th year courses stressing reading, writing, & speaking. | German 2B | 10 Units CP (or 5 Units per sem.) |
| German C | Commercial German for those preparing for a job requiring German. Typing, forms, catalogues, etc. | Anytime after German 2A | 5 Units HS (Also 2 or 3 units) |
| German SP | Special Studies in German for those who want to pursue a special area in German at their own pace and leisure. | May be taken at the same time as courses 2,3,4,5. | 1-5 Units HS |
| German HC | Honors Conversation. Short talks, debates, & discussions on controversial topics. | At least 2 years of German and teachers approval. May be repeated for credit. | 2 Units CP |

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|---|---|---|---|
| German AP | Advanced Placement. College level courses for actual college credits. | At least 2 years of German & teacher's recommendation. May last 2 years. | 10 Units CP |
| German Comp. | Essays and/or creative writing and/or translations. | 3 years of German (May repeat) | 3 Units CP |
| German L | Linguistics. Formal study of German structure; comparative grammar. | 3 years of German | 3 Units CP |
| German T | Teacher Cadet in German. Tutor individuals; lead small groups; give quizzes; keep records. | At least be at German 3 level, teacher approval (May repeat.) | 5 Units HS |

Note: 2 or more courses may be taken simultaneously.

HS courses yield units toward high school graduation.

CP courses do this too, but in addition yield units toward the foreign language requirements that some colleges have for entrance.

All courses will have specific "packages" of work so that a student will know exactly how many units of credit he has completed at any time. In the early courses the packages will be already made up--containing text, tape recordings, student magazines, practice tests, and final tests. In advanced courses the student and teacher will sit down together and design the package to suit the individual student. (No written tests in A, B, X.)

Gerald Logan
Live Oak High School
Morgan Hill, California

## Peace Corps Materials Project
## -Toward Individualization-

The Center for Curriculum Development, Philadelphia, has undertaken to develop basic language programs for training Peace Corps Volunteers in Brazilian Portuguese, French for West Africa, and Korean. Programs will not only include the production of basal texts but concommitant audio-visual-programatic materials with syllabi and procedures for teacher training.

A unique feature of these courses is the parallel multi-dimensional planning for flexibility of instruction. Plans call for not one but several basic programs, identical in structural content but different in format and vocabulary, permitting maximum flexibility to meet individual or program needs.

Projected Portuguese materials, for example, are being produced in six to seven dimensions, each with separate purposes and mode of presentation, but each able to be used entirely separately if only one objective is desired. The projected Portuguese materials may be best visualized as follows:

| Mode | Course |
|---|---|
| A. Audio-visual: Tape & illustrative filmstrip | Phonology: BASIC COURSE → |
| B. Audio-lingual expansion*: printed & photograph | VOCATIONAL - TECHNICAL MATERIAL → |
| C. Color Photography | CULTURAL - SITUATION CONTEXTS → |
| D. Printed | EXPLICIT REFERENCE GRAMMAR → |
| E. Index Card | ROLE-PLAYING CULTURAL-TECHNICAL SITUATIONS → |
| F. Index Card | SUPPLEMENTARY MICRO-WAVE CLUSTERS → |
| G. Programmed Text | OUTLINE OF GRAMMAR → |

*Following the suggestions of A. Bruce Gaarder in "Beyond Grammar & Beyond Drills," in FL Annals, December, 1967.

Philip D. Smith
Director, Peace Corps Project
CCD, Philadelphia, Pa.

Notes

According to Gerald Logan, the second volume of the Britannica Review of Foreign Language Education will be devoted to individualization. Two courses in teacher training for individualized instruction have been offered recently at San Jose State College and San Francisco State College, taught by Robert McClennan and Gerald Logan respectively.

Professors Howard B. Altman and Robert A. Morrey are collaborating to write a book on individualization of foreign language learning. Please send any pertinent information to Professor Altman at Stanford University.

Please send letters, short articles, bibliographical items, etc., to either editor of this Newsletter. Material about all languages will be considered. The next issue will be mailed in April.